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GOVERNOR BARBOUR: FEDERAL FUNDS A BIG BOOST FOR RECOVERY

Interoperable Communications, Housing Vouchers Among Items Approved

Jackson, Mississippi - Governor Haley Barbour said today new federal funding approved by congressional conferees is a major boost to Katrina recovery efforts. He especially applauded \$100 million that was approved for a new interoperable communications system that will help first responders stay in touch in the early hours after a disaster strikes.

"I want to thank Senator Cochran for his outstanding leadership throughout consideration of the Fiscal Year 2009 Supplemental Appropriations bill. Approval of these funds is a significant step in Mississippi's continuing recovery from the worst natural disaster in American history," Governor Barbour said.

"In fact, the entire Mississippi congressional delegation - Senator Cochran, Senator Wicker, and Congressmen Gene Taylor, Gregg Harper, Bennie Thompson, and Travis Childers - has been and continues to be instrumental in our common goal of rebuilding better than ever from Hurricane Katrina," Governor Barbour said.

Governor Barbour said funding for a top notch interoperable communications system was crucial.

"In the critical hours immediately after Katrina made landfall we learned our first responders had no way to communicate with each other, since traditional services were knocked flat by the storm," he said. "With these new funds we can complete implementation of a redundant, survivable system that will ensure our first responders will never again find themselves without the ability to communicate quickly in times of need."

Governor Barbour also said funding for additional housing vouchers will greatly assist many families in finding affordable homes.

Last night, Senator Cochran announced these other funding details in the FY 2009 Supplemental Appropriations bill:

- \$439 million for Mississippi's Barrier Islands - Funds will be used to fortify and restore Mississippi's barrier islands, which were severely damaged during the hurricanes of 2005. The islands span a 45-mile stretch about 12 miles off the coast of Mississippi and serve to weaken the impact of hurricanes. The funding is provided in response to a report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers identifying restoration activities and estimating the funding needed.
- \$80 million for new housing vouchers for areas impacted by Hurricane Katrina - Funding will enable the State of Mississippi, along with Public Housing Authorities and Case Management Services, to work to expeditiously place Mississippians who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina in permanent homes.
- Extension of FEMA disaster housing case management for the State of Mississippi - Provisions in the bill will allow FEMA to continue reimbursing Mississippi through March 2010 for activities to help find permanent housing solutions for families remaining in FEMA housing. A majority of these households are elderly or disabled and have little ability to transition into permanent housing without proper case management. At its peak, more than 70,000 Mississippi households displaced by Hurricane Katrina were living in housing provided by FEMA; today, less than 600 remain in the three coastal counties.
- \$49 million for the MS Army Ammunition Plant (MSAAP) at Stennis Space Center - Funding will go to repair the former Mississippi Army Ammunition Plant, which was damaged by Hurricane Katrina and is scheduled to be transferred from Army control back to NASA under provisions of the 2005 round of BRAC. The Army operated the 4,400 acre plant from 1984 to 1990, employing more than 3,500. Since its closure in 1990, the Army has deferred maintenance and invested minimal resources in the upkeep of the property.

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